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CYRUS HALL McCORMICK; HIS LIFE AND WORK,
BY HERBERT N. CASSON.

A. C. McClurg & Co., Publishers, 1909

The life work of Cyrus H. McCormick, was a silent but potent force in the wonderful advancement of Illinois—and of the entire country—and yet he was not a statesman, warrior, historian, or politician. His biographer says of him, in this book, “He was not brilliant. He was not picturesque. He was no caterer for fame or favor,” but “As the master builder of the modern business of farm machinery, McCormick set in motion so many forces of human betterment that the fruitfulness of his life can never be fully told.” He was the inventor of the reaping machine—a mechanical contrivance more effective in revolutionizing the industries and commerce of the world than the cotton gin of Eli Whitney or Morse’s electric telegraph. He was not a dreamer, but a worker; a natural mechanic—as was his father before him—endowed with more than an ordinary share of inventive skill.

Cyrus McCormick was born on his father’s farm at the northern edge of Rockbridge county in the state of Virginia, in 1809, that year so singularly prolific of men of genius, Darwin, Tennyson, Poe, Holmes, Lincoln, Gladstone and others, whose fame will endure so long as language is written. On the farm was an old shop well stocked with a blacksmith’s outfit and wood worker’s tools. There the father, Robert McCormick, and Cyrus “tinkered” at odd jobs on rainy days and at other off times. And there the father invented and made a hemp-brake, a clover huller, a shop bellows and a crude threshing machine, but his repeated attempts to invent a grain reaper resulted in dismal failures. Then and there, but a little later, Cyrus took up the work, and profiting by his father’s mistakes, and adopting new plans of his own, at the age of twenty-one, succeeded in producing the first

practical reaping machine moved by horse power. Strange that this renowned device should have been the invention of a boy in the hills of Old Virginia without even a suggestion from the cute Yankee or any sharp observer in the vast grain belt of the west. But McCormick patented his work and was too shrewd to allow himself to be robbed of the fruits of his invention as were Whitney, Fulton and Arkwright.

For a long time the possibilities of the McCormick reaper were not apparent to his neighbors who looked at it with amusement and suspicion. In the meantime adversity overtook him. He failed in the development of the land his father gave him, and it was sold to pay his debts. His venture in running an iron furnace was equally disastrous. In all his trials, however, he hung on tenaciously to his machine, endeavoring all the time to popularize it. In 1840 there were but three of the reapers in use, his own and two he had sold for \$50 each. He further improved them and raised the price to \$100. Then he began to sell district rights to use his patents and saw the dawn of success. With prophetic foresight he concluded to take his invention to the great grain raising prairies of the west, where its economic value would be appreciated, and wisely selected Chicago as the future center of his operations. He at once engaged there in the manufacture of reapers on an extensive scale, and phenomenal prosperity rewarded his enterprise. But at its height occurred the memorable fire of Oct. 1871, that swept away his establishment. Crippled, but undaunted, he immediately rebuilt it on a larger scale, and sent his reapers all over the civilized world. When he died, in 1884, the dream of his younger days, that his invention would place him among the millionaires, was fully realized. Cyrus McCormick was a Democrat and a Presbyterian, and withal a citizen of the highest and purest character.

The story of his life—his hopes and aspirations, his struggles and labors, reverses and success—is all com-

prehensively given to the public in this volume. It is a well-merited and timely tribute to the life and achievements of a remarkable man, appropriately offered upon this the centennial anniversary of his birth, for which Mr. Casson is entitled to the gratitude of all admirers of true genius.

SOMETHING OF MEN I HAVE KNOWN; WITH
SOME PAPERS OF A GENERAL NATURE,
POLITICAL, HISTORICAL AND
RETROSPECTIVE.

By ADLAI E. STEVENSON
A. C. McClurg & Co., Publishers, 1909

Of several volumes of historical import issued during the present year (1909) one of the most attractive and entertaining is the above entitled work of Hon. Adlai Ewing Stevenson, of Bloomington, Ills., former Vice President of the United States. Although transcending in its scope the limits of Illinois, it is nevertheless distinctively an Illinois book, well worthy to take rank among the products of the best Illinois writers.

And though a native of Kentucky, Gen. Stevenson is, in every essential respect, an Illinoian by right of his residence here for almost the entire period allotted to man's existence—three score and ten years—and by his identification in that time with every material interest of the State which he has so highly honored. And now in the closing days of his busy, useful and well-spent life he has employed his leisure hours in writing “in the spirit of candor of men he has known, and of great events in which he has himself borne no inconspicuous part.”

Beginning with his admission to the bar he tells of the early courts in central Illinois, and something of his legal colleagues who “rode the circuits” and ably upheld the purity and dignity of western jurisprudence. Elected to represent his district in the 44th Congress, and re-elected to the 46th, subsequently serving four years as Assistant